

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
October 17, 2001**

The regular meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 9:00 a.m., on October 17, 2001, in Room 1D2 of the Transportation Building in Olympia, Washington.

Commissioners present were: Chris Marr, Ed Barnes, Aubrey Davis, Elmira Forner, George Kargianis, A. Michèle Maher and Connie Niva.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Commissioner Barnes, and seconded by Commissioner Davis, to approve the minutes of the September 26, 2001 Commission meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY REPORTS

Secretary MacDonald reported that the latest Alaskan Way Viaduct leadership group meeting, held the previous Monday evening, was an extremely productive meeting. He stated that the Department and consultant engineers provided excellent information about alternative approaches to replacement, and received constructive feedback from the participants. He stated that the process is receiving good media coverage, and the members of the leadership group are talking to the neighborhoods that could be affected.

Secretary MacDonald stated that he is working on a refinement to the basic presentation developed by the Department for community presentations, which will be delivered to the Washington Competitiveness Council. He indicated the commissioners would receive a copy of the presentation.

Dave Dye, Urban Corridors Administrator, briefed the Commission regarding the educational tours being taken by Mr. Dye and the other members of his staff. They have visited several states to learn how those states funded, designed and constructed major transportation facilities. He briefly reviewed some of the lessons learned to date, including the various organizational structures used, the staffing processes, funding mechanisms and requirements for project definition and design. He stated that a formal report will be written and a presentation provided to the Commission at a later date.

Daniela Bremmer, Acting Regional Planning Branch & Performance Manager, briefed the Commission regarding the most recent edition of the Measures, Markers and Mileposts Report, covering the quarter ending September 30, 2001. She stated that the report continues to evolve as feedback is received regarding how well the measures communicate and what additional measures are needed. The following staff reviewed with the Commission the details of the measurement results within the quarterly report. Greg Selstead, Program Delivery Manager, reviewed the fiscal year 2002 first quarter results for highway construction program delivery, indicating that the start of the program for this biennium has been strong. John Milton, Assistant State Design Engineer, briefed the Commission on the top ten crash spot

and corridor locations based on 1999-2000 data. The Commission discussed the fact that locations with safety problems may have solutions posed under the mobility program rather than the safety program, because the underlying problem may be congestion or the solution may be a capacity improvement. The Commission identified the fact as warranting a further discussion during the Commission's upcoming review of the priority programming policies. The Commission also discussed the relative safety issues in western Washington compared to eastern Washington. Toby Rickman, State Traffic Engineer, continued the discussion regarding safety indicators by discussing delivery of safety enhancement projects and fatality rates compared to national trends and vehicle miles traveled within Washington. Rico Baroga, Maintenance Accountability Process Manager, briefed the Commission on the highway maintenance program delivery, both in terms of output of selected activities and efficiency savings, and in terms of achievement of biennial maintenance service level targets. Bill Greene, WSF Budget Director, reviewed with the Commission the performance measures for customer complaints and comments, which have had a general improvement during the past few years but which reflected for this quarter the impact of the tariff increases. He also briefed the Commission on the on-time performance delivery and trip reliability index, and the ridership and farebox revenue indicators. Secretary MacDonald discussed with the Commission a comparison to other ferry systems, which indicates clearly that each ferry system in the country has a unique set of services and operating conditions that make comparisons difficult. Sandra Pedigo-Marshall, State Traffic Planning and Policy Manager, briefed the Commission on the measures of response and clearance time for the WSDOT Incident Response teams and the number of contacts and types of contacts for the service patrols. She also discussed the several initiatives underway to improve system operation efficiency, including a new "Road Ranger" program proposal to combine the service patrol and incident response programs for better roadside assistance and traffic control, increased efforts to perform maintenance and construction outside of the peak traffic periods, improved traffic light synchronization, improved snow and ice operations, expansion of no parking zones on the freeways, increased weigh-in-motion devices for truck overweight control to eliminate congestion caused by trucks merging onto the highways after weighing, and better traveler information through new traffic management centers in Spokane, Vancouver and Yakima. Kirk Frederickson, Rail Planning and Policy Analyst, reported on the ridership performance of the Amtrak Cascades service, which was tracking very closely to the 2000 ridership performance until the September 11th attack, at which point ridership declined six percent compared to September 2000. He also discussed the efforts of Amtrak and the Department to work with US Customs and Immigration to minimize the impact of new security measures on system performance. Mr. Frederickson reported on the "seats sold per segment", which reveals how full the train is as it moves along the route, and thus gives an indication as to the purpose of the travel (business, tourism, etc.). Ms. Bremmer closed the reporting of performance by summarizing the performance of the Commute Trip Reduction program. Public vanpooling continues to grow, but the limited parking capacity in park and ride lots continues to be a constraint on ridesharing.

Secretary MacDonald briefed the Commission on the status of security measures in the wake of the September 11th attack. He stated that Department staff were receiving instructions on how to be the "eyes and ears" for the Department's effort to keep the Department's buildings and facilities safe for the employees and public. He pointed out

that long-term security measures would be guided by national policy, which is still being put into place.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Maher reported that she participated in the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Sprague Interchange on I-90, and commented on the fact that the participants were pleased to be able to meet Secretary MacDonald and to be able to express their support for investment in the transportation system. She also reported that the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad is considering placing an embargo on shortline traffic through the Fairchild Air Force Base lands, looking for ways to bypass the airfield for security reasons. The bypass, however, will likely cost money to accomplish. There may also be an economic impact from the change in freight traffic patterns.

Commissioner Forner reported that she was working with the House Republican Caucus to arrange a presentation to be provided by herself and commissioners Marr and Davis regarding the need for investment in the transportation system. She also reported on her participation in the freight mobility conference in Seattle and the most recent North Central Regional Transportation Planning Organization board meeting.

Commissioner Davis reported that the Puget Sound Regional Council applied to the USDOT for the value-pricing pilot project grant. He also attended a conference on transportation sponsored by the University of Washington Evans School of Public Affairs. He reported that he had also spent considerable time meeting with the mayors and council members of the communities neighboring the SR 520 Bridge to discuss the alternatives being considered in the Trans-Lake Washington study.

Commissioner Kargianis reported on his participation in the I-405 Environmental Impact Statement process.

Commissioner Niva reported on her vacation in China, and commented on the significant investment in transportation being made in the country. She indicated that the government is investing in highways and railroads and that the systems work very well.

Commissioner Marr reported that he participated in the ribbon cutting ceremony at the Sprague Interchange on I-90 in Spokane. He also reviewed with the commissioners a proposal for locations for the 2002 local area Commission meetings. The Commission members agreed to meeting in Seattle, Chehalis, Ellensburg, and Colville. In addition, the Commission will combine its travel for a rules hearing on ferry tariffs with a day spent with Washington State Ferries. Commissioner Marr then raised the question of whether the Commission should write letters of support for grant applications by other governments. The Commission members discussed the pros and cons of writing letters of support, and requested that Chris Rose, Commission Administrator, and Paula Hammond, Chief of Staff, provide the Commission with several examples of when the Commission or Department have written letters of support and also provide a draft policy regarding the issue for consideration by the Commission at the November Commission meeting.

Commissioner Barnes reported that he participated in the Southwest Regional Transportation Council's meeting in which the regionalization issue was discussed. Concerns continue to be expressed regarding how regional financing of transportation projects will be coordinated with statewide transportation funding. He also distributed correspondence regarding the HOV Pilot Project in the Vancouver area. Commissioner Barnes suggested that the Commission write to the Governor and Congress, calling for an infrastructure investment program for economic stimulus, using the federal surplus that is currently targeted for tax reductions.

PUBLIC AND LEGISLATOR COMMENT PERIOD

Mel Williamson discussed with the Commission the safety problems at the intersection of US 101 and Lynch Road, near Shelton, and the steps the Department and community were taking to resolve those problems. He requested that the Commission support the funding of preliminary engineering work on a Simmons Road Alternative for \$100,000, funding to build the alternative estimated at \$1,000,000, and fund the environmental work for a long-range solution, which would likely be an overpass. Secretary MacDonald reviewed the Capital Improvement and Preservation Plan and informed Mr. Williamson that the \$100,000 request for an alternatives analysis is in the Commission's supplemental budget and capital plan, but will require funding by the Legislature. He also noted that there is a class of projects across the state similar to this safety project, all of which are in need of legislative funding.

Meta Heller, representing Common Ground, informed the Commission that writer Dean Ing was in Olympia over the weekend to discuss the future of transportation, including the potential for a container freight monorail corridor along the interstate right-of-way to reduce truck traffic on the freeways.

HIGHWAY OPERATIONS PLAN FOR WSDOT

Brian Ziegler, Director, Maintenance and Operations, briefed the Commission regarding the Department's work in developing a highway operations plan. The plan is intended to state the investments that need to be made during the next six years in the areas of maintenance, traffic operations, facilities and the transportation equipment fund. Mr. Ziegler indicated that the plan will have a vision and mission statement, and will reflect the fact that in addition to capacity improvements, significant improvements need to be made in the operation of the system. He stated that the plan would include elements such as the coordination with the Washington State Patrol, winter operations, traveler information, agency operations, the facilities required to aid in the movement of freight, the incident response program, traffic management centers and asset management. He concluded his presentation by outlining the types of strategies that might be included in the plan.

Mr. Ziegler also provided the Commission a written report concerning the incident northbound on I-5 at 178th on September 26, 2001, which was a multi-vehicle crash. The report assessed how the proposed improvements to the traffic incident response program would relate to a situation such as the one encountered on the 26th.

2002 AGENCY REQUEST LEGISLATION

Don Griffith, Director, Governmental Liaison Office, informed the Commission that the Department has developed two agency request legislative proposals. He introduced Ron Niemi, Facility Planning and Operations Manager and Shari Schaftlein, Deputy Director, Environmental Services Office, indicating that they would brief the Commission regarding the proposed legislation.

Mr. Niemi briefed the Commission regarding legislation that would streamline the process for the Department to exchange property for the purpose of cost-effectively improving its facilities. Currently, the Department must surplus and vacate a property before it can be disposed of. This proposal would allow the Department to occupy its facilities until the exchange process is completed.

Ms. Schaftlein briefed the Commission regarding legislation that would authorize the Department to enter into exchange agreements with local, state, or federal agencies, or non-profit groups to allow the transfer of Department environmental mitigation sites, as full or partial consideration for the grantee assuming all future maintenance and operation obligations and costs. The property would automatically revert to the Department if the property is not maintained as required. The Commission discussed the proposal, and suggested that the Department reconsider the broad title of the draft bill.

Mr. Griffith closed the presentation by stating that the Department would continue to refine the proposals and seek Commission approval at the November 2001 Commission meeting.

LUNCH MEETING WITH THE OFFICE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND THE GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE POLICY STAFF

The Commission and the representatives of the Governor's Executive Policy Office and the Office of Financial Management discussed the status of General Fund revenues, the Department's proposal for a 2002 supplemental budget, and the pending transportation revenue forecast.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST ECONOMIC REGION

Commissioner Forner introduced Matt Morrison, Executive Director for the Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER). She reported that she met Mr. Morrison during a PNWER conference in British Columbia in July. The conference dealt with a wide range of topics affecting the states and provinces in the Pacific Northwest, including transportation and economic development, and she asked Mr. Morrison to come and talk about PNWER's work in those areas and also the work of PNWER in the development of proposals for the reauthorization of TEA 21.

Mr. Morrison provided a brief history of the organization, which is an organization, authorized by state and provincial statutes and is governed by a board composed of state and provincial elected officials. Dues paid by each state and province support the organization. A transportation working group was formed in 1991, which

participated in the development of TEA 21 and the border and trade corridor funding programs within TEA 21. Mr. Morrison discussed the Inland Corridor Project, which is in the process of developing business plans for the major trade corridors east of the Cascade Mountains, such as SR 97 and SR 395. The project is also working to resolve border-crossing issues between the United States and Canada. He pointed out that Alberta is a major source of freight for Idaho and Washington, and is an active participant in PNWER. Mr. Morrison stated that the Inland Corridor Project is intended to promote regional economic development by coordinating the public and private sector interests in the development of a business plan. The intention is to complete the business planning for all the corridors within the next twelve months, to position the region for full benefits from TEA 21 reauthorization. He advised the Commission that the reauthorization of TEA 21 would include the concept of “transportation sheds”, similar to watersheds, and would require an extensive use of origin-and-destination studies. Mr. Morrison requested that the Commission send a letter to the Oregon Transportation Commission and the other states and provinces endorsing the need for continued joint planning through the Inland Corridor Project. The Commission agreed to have the staff prepare a letter for consideration at the November Commission meeting. Commissioner Forner stated that the information produced by the Inland Corridor Project and by PNWER is very valuable, and the Commission should continue to be involved.

TEA 21 REAUTHORIZATION

Paula Hammond, Chief of Staff, reviewed with the Commission the purpose and history of past collaborative efforts within the state to work through federal six-year authorization program issues. In the past, the discussions with other state partners have focused on implementation after passage, rather than attempting to develop common positions to increase Washington State’s influence in the reauthorization debates.

Andrew Johnsen, Governor’s Transportation Policy Advisor, stated that pressures are increasing nationwide in the discussion regarding reauthorization of TEA 21, as states lobby for increased flexibility in the use of federal funds. The Governor’s Office is convening a committee of stakeholders such as the Department, the Association of Washington Cities, the Washington State Association of Counties, the Washington Transit Association, the Washington Public Ports Association, the Legislature, the Metropolitan Planning Organizations, the Tribes and other interested parties, to provide a forum for discussing the issues and determining where the organizations have common interests or positions.

Ms. Hammond informed the Commission that the Department would work with the Commission to develop the policy positions that would be represented by the Department in the Committee. Commissioner Marr suggested that Commissioner Niva, as past chair, participate on the Committee in a liaison role, recognizing that the Department would be the voting member.

Peter Downey, Financial Policy Manager, described the Department’s internal structure for developing information and policy options for consideration by the Secretary and the Commission. He presented a list of policy issues for reauthorization,

which had been developed by the staff team. He indicated that in some policy areas, the staff achieved a consensus as to what position should be taken, while in other policy areas, the staff expressed diverse viewpoints. He indicated that the Department would seek the Commission's concurrence on the positions agreed to by staff, and would seek the Commission guidance in the areas the Department is still debating.

Ms. Hammond concluded the presentation by informing the Commission that the Department would prepare white papers on the policy issues and share those with the Commission during the next several meetings to obtain guidance from the Commission.

WASHINGTON TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Elizabeth Robbins, Director, Planning and Advocacy Initiatives, informed the Commission that the Highway System Plan, which is an element of the Washington Transportation Plan, would be brought to the Commission for approval at the November Commission meeting. She stated that the Department would be seeking approval of four major changes in the Highway System Plan at this meeting, in preparation for the final approval. The four areas are: Pavement Preservation, Congestion Relief, Rural Economic Development, and Stormwater Retrofit.

Linda Pierce, State Pavement Engineer, informed the Commission that the Department updated its estimates for white pavement and black pavement needs. She stated that the estimate for the cost of preservation for the Portland Cement Concrete Pavement was increased from \$491 million in 1997 to \$1,696 million in the 2001 estimate. The reason for the increase is a need to catch up with the aging pavement, an improved monitoring system that has made a more accurate prediction than in 1997, and an increase in the cost per lane mile. She stated that the estimate for the cost of preservation for the Asphalt Concrete Pavement was increased from \$1,711 million in 1997 to \$2,191 million in the 2001 estimate. The reason for the increase is an increase in the cost of construction due to inflation, and increase in oil prices, compliance with stricter environmental regulations and the costs of shifting to night-time pavement to minimize disruptions to traffic. She requested Commission endorsement of the cost estimate increases.

It was moved by Commissioner Barnes, and seconded by Commissioner Niva, to endorse incorporating the pavement cost changes into the updated Highway System Plan. The motion was approved unanimously.

Greg Lippincott, Acting Systems Planning Manager, informed the Commission that an updated estimate of the cost of addressing traffic congestion was made in response to the changed methodology of tracking performance through the 24-hour deficiency measure. The cost of addressing the deficiencies increased from \$31.2 billion in 1997 to 37.6 billion in the 2001 estimate. Mr. Lippincott requested endorsement of the cost estimate increase.

It was moved by Commissioner Barnes, and seconded by Commissioner Kargianis, to endorse incorporating the congestion relief cost changes into the updated Highway System Plan. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Robbins informed the Commission that the Department developed a new component to the Economic Initiative Subprogram within the Improvement Program. The Department is proposing that a rural economic development strategy be endorsed by the Commission, which would provide an allocation of funds within the I3 subprogram specifically targeted towards investments in transportation that would support economic development in rural areas. The allocation would be distributed to the various regions by a formula based on a combination of rural counties population and lane miles. The criteria for funding a project would be that the conceptual solutions address traffic flow or an access deficiency that directly affects a basic industry, or the conceptual solutions promote economic development such as a targeted industry or tourism. The Department and the regional transportation planning organization would have to agree on the solution. A percentage of the funding currently devoted to congestion relief would be shifted to this new subprogram. Ms. Robbins requested the Commission endorsement of the strategy, the allocation methodology and the concept of shifting fund from the congestion relief program.

It was moved by Commissioner Kargianis, and seconded by Commissioner Maher, to endorse the proposed strategy, allocation formula and redistribution of funds to provide a rural economic development component to the Economic Initiative Subprogram of the Improvement program. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Robbins then explained the increase of the cost estimate for the storm water component of the Environmental Retrofit Subprogram of the Improvement Program. Since the 1999-2018 Highway System Plan, the inventory of facilities needing storm water retrofit increased to 3,700 projects and an average project cost of \$300,000. The cost for storm water retrofit needs increased by 62% to \$1.1 billion. Ms. Robbins requested the Commission approve the cost increase.

It was moved by Commissioner Barnes, and seconded by Commissioner Maher, to endorse the inclusion of the increased cost of the storm water retrofit strategy in the Environmental Retrofit Subprogram of the Improvement Program. The motion passed unanimously.

Todd Carlson, Acting Manager, Transportation Planning Office, presented to the Commission the working draft of the Washington Transportation Plan update, and recognized the efforts of Kathy Johnston and Seth Stark of the Transportation Planning Office in writing the plan. He also recognized the cooperation received in preparing the plan from the Department regional planners, the Department modal offices, the regional transportation planning organizations and the tribes. Mr. Carlson briefly discussed the format of the draft, which the Commission members had reviewed in advance of the meeting, and indicated that a final plan would be presented for approval to be distributed for public comment at the November meeting. He asked for the participation of

commissioners in meetings with the various regional transportation planning organization boards, during which the draft plan would be discussed. The commissioners agreed to participate. Commissioner Davis pointed out that the plan's previous statement that makes it clear that Sound Transit is an integral part of the solution to Central Puget Sound traffic congestion was not incorporated in the update draft. Secretary MacDonald stated that the omission would be corrected.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT AND PRESERVATION PROGRAM ADOPTION

Rick Smith, Director, Planning and Capital Program Management, presented the final draft of the Capital Improvement and Preservation Program for 2001-2003. He reviewed the changes made to the draft since the September meeting, and requested approval by the Commission. He pointed out that the Program Management staff would continue to update cost and timing estimates as necessary, and document those updates with published errata.

It was moved by Commissioner Barnes, and seconded by Commissioner Niva, to approve Resolution 621, which adopts the proposed 2001-2003 Capital Improvement and Preservation Program for the Department of Transportation, as presented on October 17, 2001. The motion passed unanimously.

The Commission meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m. on October 17, 2001.